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AUTHOR Schoenherr, Charles W.
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ABSTRACT

Results of a self-study by Sterling College, Kansas, on the impact of federal programs are discussed. Sterling College, a small college with an enrollment of 500 students, has received 54 percent of its tuition dollars from federal and state programs. Until 1977-78 when $147,000 was received in federal support for program development, only small amounts of federal funds were received. A survey of college officials revealed that in general there is a minimum level of understanding of regulations pertaining to governmental programs. There is uncertainty about whether the college's affirmative action plan is acceptable, whether the due process system will stand up in courts, or whether the college is offering equal opportunity to both sexes in all areas. Demands of federal reports have required time-consuming efforts on the part of the office of student aid and the business office. Title IX regulations have changed priorities in the physical education program. It is concluded that the small college is in a difficult position and must decide whether receiving federal dollars is the best course of action, or whether it is possible to gather enough support to manage alone. A sample questionnaire used in the self-study is included. (SW)

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STERLING COLLEGE

Sterling, Kansas

A Report to

THE SLOAN COMMISSION

On Government and Higher Education

September 30, 1977

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"A Self-Study on the Impact of Federal Programs on the Sterling College campus."

Charles W. Schoenherr
President and Project Director

HE 012 482

Sterling College fits the profile of a very small college as defined by Joseph Kershaw in his Report to the Ford Foundation entitled The Very Small College. The College is an independent, liberal arts college, located in the heart of rural America, (Sterling, Kansas.) It was founded by a group of Presbyterians in 1887 only 20 years after the Comanche, Arapahoe, Apache and Cheyenne Indians signed peace treaties with the Federal Government. The founders of the College, wanted "to afford young men and women an opportunity to obtain a liberal education enlightened by the teaching of the Bible and the life of Christ."

Still associated with the United Presbyterian Church. U.S.A., Sterling College has an enrollment of 500 students drawn primarily from rural areas. The City of Sterling, Kansas, is not in the mainstream of anything except the flight patterns of super jets flying over our city at 37,000 feet altitudes and the television beams bringing the east and west coast into our living rooms. Forty years ago the population in the community was 2200, today, 1977, the population is still 2200. The college is the largest single employer in the county and serves as the center for culture in this culturally-isolated community amidst the Kansas wheatfields.

The College is fully accredited by the North Central Accrediting Association and also is accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE.) Her faculty numbers 36 full-time equivalent. Sixteen liberal arts majors are offered including Education, Business Administration and Home Economics.

Philosophically and theologically the College is conservative. Her mission is to provide a sound educational experience in the liberal arts tradition while at the same time attempting to develop a world and life view which unites the truth found in the various disciplines with Biblical truth. Faculty are recruited who are committed Christians and who support the mission of the college.

Thirty-five percent (35%) of the students are from Presbyterian backgrounds. This represents the largest single group based on religious affiliation. The Presbyterian denomination does not contribute direct financial support to the college; however, individuals who are Presbyterians do play a major role in our fund raising efforts and they represent a sizeable proportion of our constituency. In no way is the hierarchy of the Presbyterian denomination involved in the operation of the College. The College Board of Trustees is a self-perpetuating body.

The educational and general cost per student at Sterling (1976-77) was $3590. (Education and general expenses divided by number of full time students) Of that amount 51% was covered by tuition and fees. During 1976-77 Sterling College received a total of state and federal dollars equalling $507,000. That represents 54% of the total received in tuition and fees. With the exception of $20,000 all of the $507,000 was in the form of student aid. The $20,000 was for program development through BIDP of Title III, Office of Education, and Title II.

The breakdown of our state and federal dollars for 1976-77 is as follows:

NDSL	$ 62,398
SEOG	$ 37,477
BEOG	$171,332
TITLE III	$ 17,401
CWSP	$ 75,673
TITLE II	$ 3,918
Kansas State Tuition Grants	$138,810

The significant fact mentioned above is that 54% of our tuition dollars come from federal and state programs. Although the money is given to the student it comes back to the college in the form of tuition payments. This underscores the point that many very small colleges, like Sterling, are dependent upon federal and state dollars. Up until this year, only small amounts of federal monies have been received for program development. Three years ago the college had a FIPSE Grant of $40,000 and last year we had a $17,000 grant under the BIDP - Title III, Office of Education. Currently, (1977-78) we have a total of $147,000 for program development.

PROCEDURES OF SURVEY:

A questionnaire (see attachment) was sent to the following offices.

Dean of Student Development

Comptroller

Business Manager & Director of Physical Plant

Director of Financial Aid

Publicity Department

Director of Admissions

Registrar

Director of Intercollegiate Athletics

Alumni Director

Academic Dean

The questionnaires were completed, returned and were followed up by an interview. The interview was not structured but in each case the interviewee was given the opportunity to expand on his/her responses to the questionnaire. The omission of faculty from the survey was deliberate. Since no research funds are involved, there did not seem to be occasion when the faculty would have been involved directly with federal regulations. Informal visits with faculty members reinforced this assumption. They had little or no direct contact with the federal government, although they were aware that the government is alive and active.

WHAT WAS DISCOVERED THROUGH QUESTIONNAIRES AND INTERVIEWS

I. In general, the offices are familiar with the regulations pertaining to the governmental programs that impact their area of responsibility. As would be expected they are more familiar with certain regulations than they are with others. However, this is a relative matter. Upon further questioning of those who completed questionnaires, it was apparent that in most instances their knowledge of the regulations was at a minimum level of understanding. None of them felt they had a good grasp of all the regulations pertaining to their operations. This created

a sense of uneasiness with some individuals and in one or two cases it was a cause of real enxiety for fear they would be investigated and found to be illegal.

Sterling College does not have an attorney on its staff whose responsibility it is to read, study, interpret and regulate departmental activities in line with governmental guidelines. Therefore we rely upon amateurs or "would be" lawyers to translate to the best of their knowledge what the regulations say and what practices to implement. This is all we can afford. National Associations such as the Council for the Advancement of Small Colleges and the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities have provided assistance to the very small colleges in interpreting regulations and suggesting models which the small schools might be able to adopt.

The feeling amongst those who were interviewed was similar to the feeling one would get if he asked himself whether or not he has kept God's law? "Which one?" "All of them?" "What about the ones I do not even know?" The tendency for all of us is to argue that we prefer darkness to light. The attitude expressed on this very small campus, as it relates to the federal government, is analogous to that. When the light of the federal government shines brightly upon us, so we are afraid of what it will expose.

If the very small colleges has anything to contribute to the commission it would be to say as loudly and clearly as is possible that the syndrome "big brother is watching over you" has created an attitude

of fear and worry on our campuses. Not because we are guilty of doing something wrong, nor because we disagree with the intent of the regulations, but because we worry about not being able to follow the letter of the law, even though the spirit of the law is supported and practiced. The threat of consequences when caught in some violation causes many anxieties. Others have described the same phenomena as the "hold your breath" plan.

II. The survey revealed that there was little disagreement with the intent of the laws. The regulations have caused many changes on the very small campuses and are viewed as positive and constructive. Title IX has forced changes that have been needed, the Civil Rights Act has reduced, if not eliminated, many of the discrimatory practices, etc., etc., etc. The problems that have been created have had to do with the implementation and interpretation of the Congressional Acts. We are not sure our Affirmative Action Plan is acceptable, or whether our due process system will stand the scrutiny of the courts, or whether we are offering equal opportunity to both sexes in all areas, or whether our safety standards meet all of the OSHA's requirements, etc., etc., etc.

III. In the office of Student Aid and in the Business office the priorities in the past five years have changed because of the demands of federal reports. In the business office transactions have had to be documented in ways that permit auditors to substantiate the minutia. The reporting for government purposes has been extensive and time consuming and has created ne work in that office. The 4% reimbursement for record

keeping in the loan program doesn't begin to cover the cost of collection and paper work.

Title IX regulations have changed priorities in the Physical Education program. Classes have become co-educational, the intramural programs have been expanded to include more women's activities, more dollars have been re-directed into women's intercollegiate activities, etc.

The Registrar commented on the effect of the Buckley Amendment in relation to transcripts and records. Likewise, the Dean of Students and the publicity office felt the Privacy Act of 1974 re-arranged priorities for their areas. However, this did not appear to be a major focus of concern for the campus. Some of the priority changes have been viewed as necessary.

IV. Have government regulations impacted the nature of the student body? One would assume that the abundance of student aid dollars for those from low income families would have attracted a "different" group to our campuses than was true twenty years ago. Surprisingly, most of the individuals surveyed did not feel that the regulations have changed the nature of the student body. Perhaps the reason for this at Sterling is because the college has never attracted the affluent student. Its rural setting has appealed to farm families for years and traditionally farm families have had limited incomes. At this point the most we can say is that we do not know what impact this has had on the change of attitude and outlook of our students. It is an area which demands more

sophisticated study than we have been able to give it.

V. The State of Kansas has a tuition grant program that provides up to $1000 per year to a resident of Kansas who wishes to attend one of the private institutions in the State, and who can demonstrate financial need. (The need does not have to be at the poverty level - in fact Kansas has a liberal interpretation of need.) When the plan was first initiated, Sterling College, along with five other colleges in Kansas, was declared ineligible because students were required to attend a Chapel program. The Chapel programs were religious services and this ran into conflict with the Church-State controversy. Students who attended Sterling were not eligible for the tuition grant as long as the college required Chapel attendance. The trustees and the faculty debated the issue and decided to drop the mandatory Chapel requirement in lieu of a voluntary program. There is no doubt that this was an "intrusion" by the State in the operation of the college. Had the State not interpreted the controversy as it did, Chapels would be required today. Approximately 125 students receive grants under this program.

VI. It is difficult to assign a dollar figure to the cost of our compliance. The business office and the financial aid office are the two primary offices involved in additional costs. The business office estimates that the additional work required is the equivalent of one full-time employee in an office where there are only four employees. The financial aid director estimates that 1/3 of a full load is spent on government regulations. If I had to make a guess, or estimate, the total cost for Sterling College would be in the vicinity of $25,000 per year.

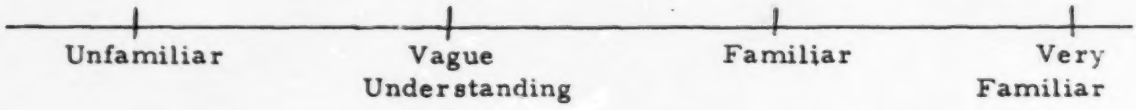
CONCLUSION

The very small college has many of the same frustrations with federal and state regulations that the multi-university has but to a much lesser degree. We tend to believe that the large public universities have an unlimited well to draw money from and that all of the excess requirements and regulations impossed by the federal and state governments can be implemented by merely going to the well and drawing another hundred thousand dollars. During our somber moments we know this not to be true. However, many of the very small colleges are in precarious financial situations and they feel that every little movement by the federal government is a threat to their existence. The minimum wage law, the possibility of extending the retirement age, and the increase in social security, all are seen as squeezing the life blood from the small schools. These feelings are similar to the attitudes of the small business man in America.

Being a college with a strong religious background we struggle with the questions of "how much further can we go?" "Will we be able to garner enough support to go it alone?" "What are we willing to sacrifice to 'go it alone?'" Right now many of the very small colleges are playing both sides of the fence. The federal dollars are appealing and attractive but how much of our soul do we sacrifice as a payoff? The fence sitting is becoming harder and harder. Maybe we have sat too long and now are faced with the decision to succumb to the federal government or die. It is questionable whether we have the freedom any longer of an alternate choice. That is an impact!

1. Which federal regulations/authorities is your office directly involved with?

1B. To what extent are you familiar with the regulations/authority that relate directly to your area?



2. According to your estimate, have the regulations accomplished what they set out to do? If not, how have they fallen short?

3. Have the regulations changed the priorities in your office? Or, during the past five (5) years, has the focus of your office changed because of federal regulations. (Please give examples.)

4. Do you feel that any of the regulations have impinged upon the nature of the student body? How?

5. Have there been intrusions by the State of Kansas on the operation of your office? In what areas?

6. Approximately how much time is devoted by your office to compliance with the federal regulations? (Please give rough estimates based on hours per week.)

7. Are there specific problems you have confronted in response to the regulations? (Please give examples.)

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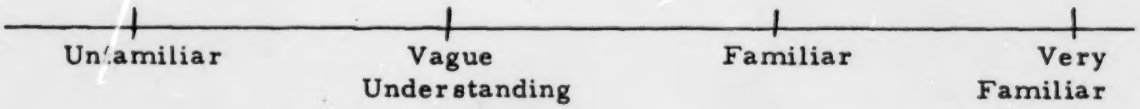

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